

Building Character – Their Walk Challenged

- *Daniel 1:*

- It has often been said that every man has his price. And your price is whatever point you sell out. Your so-called convictions, moral standards, in essence your testimony. Every man has his price. I suppose it's true of the world but it ought not to be true of believers. It ought to be true of us that there is no price which will make us compromise what we know to be true and what we believe to be God's standard for our life.
 - SLIDES
 - "The test of a man's character is what it takes to stop him." - Bob Jones Sr.
- How can God's people resist the pressures that attempt to "squeeze" them into conforming to the world?
 - Conformer: People whose lives are controlled by the pressures from the outside.
 - Transformer: People whose lives are controlled by power from the inside.
- There have always been people who have had to make a choice to stand by what they believe in regardless of the costs.
- One of the stories I recall was a preacher by the name of Richard Cameron. And one day a knock on the door of Richard Cameron's father. He went to the door to find a messenger there who opened a box and in the box he had the head and the hands of his son. And his father responded by saying "The Lord gives, the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." There are those who have paid immense prices to stand their ground and not compromise no matter what the cost. We hear all the time on the other hand about people who boast of their moral standards who talk a good game. They brag about the righteousness of their character, their great set of convictions and yet for some expedient purpose they sell out.
- Compromise. People are honest until just a little dishonesty might save them a lot of money or gain for them some great advantage. People notice something to be definitely wrong, but for the sake of peace they will cover it. People won't say what should truly be said if they feel they might lose face.
- They are many throughout the Bible that we read have compromised their convictions and values:
 - Adam
 - Abraham lied about Sarah
 - Sarah sent Hagar to lie with Abraham
 - Samson compromised his righteousness for a woman
- And yet there were some that chose not to compromise:
 - Moses
 - David
 - Paul
- But no better example, aside from Christ, do we have in Scripture I think than the life of Daniel.
- Here we have a young man who was up-rooted from his home town at the age of 14 and was held captive by a group of people who sought to brainwash him and have him turn from everything that he had committed his life to.
 - The Babylonian people were a pagan people who had no regard for God, His laws or His people.
 - And yet, Daniel remained steadfast and anchored to the rock, even through this most difficult time in his life.
- The Babylonians sought to transform this entire nation of people to their pagan ways, but they knew they first must transform some of their leaders.
- They selected the most intelligent, the most beautiful, the most captivating people to train so that they could convince the rest of the nation to follow after them.
- Of this select group was 4 young men:
 - Daniel

- Hananiah
- Mishael
- Azariah
- The Babylonians took these men as well as the rest of the Jewish leaders and they immediately began to make some changes in their life.
 - Their names
 - Daniel – Belteshazzar
 - Hananiah – Shadrach
 - Mishael – Meshach
 - Azariah – Abed-Nego
 - Their education
 - Training them through the Babylonian education system
 - Change their convictions/values
 - Change their beliefs
 - Their lifestyle
 - Changing their diet
 - Meat offered to idols
 - Changing their social life
 - Parties, drinking and wild lifestyle
 - Life of materialism & self-indulgence
- These young men accepted the name change & the education but they stood firm on their lifestyle and their convictions.
- This was a tremendous stand for them to take at such an early age in their life.
 - Their parents could not see them
 - If they had chosen to do this, it would have been accepted by the Babylonians.
- These men knew where to take their stand – their lifestyle, their testimony. For you & I the most corruptive thing this world has to offer us is a worldly lifestyle.
 - Proverbs 4:23 – “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

I. An Uncomfortable Spot (1:1-8a)

a. They Gave Themselves Wholly To The Lord

- i. Daniel & his friends gave of their hearts, their entire being, to the Lord. (1:8)
- ii. A heart that is truly given to the Lord will:
 1. Love the Lord
 2. Trust the Lord
 3. Obey the Lord
- iii. It has been said that, “faith is not believing in spite of evidence – that’s superstition – but obeying in spite of consequences.
- iv. When they had to choose between the King’s meat or the promise of God, for them the choice was easy.
 1. The key to a successful Christian life is not having the answer when a situation arises, it is having your answer BEFORE the situation arises.

b. They Did Not Run From Their Problems

- i. They knew that their problem would not just go away if they ignored it.
- ii. They did not make excuses for the issue at hand, but they spoke boldly that they would not defile their bodies with the King’s meat.
- iii. Daniel was not ashamed of his God, even in the midst of possible death.
 1. If this got back to the King, he could be put to death for disobedience.
 - a. Sometimes we will try to waffle or make excuses when we are placed in tough situations.
 - b. We need to have the character to stand for God on the issues at hand.

- c. They Were Gracious To Those In Authority
 - i. Throughout Scripture, you will find instances of men who had to defy authority in order to obey God, but they did in a gentle approach.
 - 1. Romans 12:18 – “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”
 - ii. They saw this challenge as an opportunity to prove God & honor Him.
 - 1. They did not threaten anyone, start a protest or try to burn down the palace.
 - 2. Instead, they humbly requested an alternate solution.
- II. An Uncompromising Servant (1:8b-14)
- a. Daniel set a “bar” for his life.
 - i. There was nothing wrong, according to O.T. law, with drinking wine; however, apparently Daniel had made a covenant with God and that he would abstain from this drink.
 - ii. This is the type of character that sets a person apart from the crowd. Daniel chose to live different than the crowd, above the norm. He wanted to push himself to have a closer relationship with God.
 - 1. Romans 12:1-2 – “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”
 - b. He did not give into the “Grey Area’s”.
 - i. Some may ask, “Can I do this and still be a Christian?”
 - ii. But Daniel realized that this was an area of his life that he had already committed to God and there was no room for compromise.
 - iii. Grey Area Questions:
 - 1. Does it build me up spiritually? (I Corinthians 10:23)
 - a. Often times we pray about things that we don’t have to.
 - b. Will this wind up hurting you in your relationship with God?
 - 2. Does it bring you under its power? (I Corinthian 6:12)
 - a. Can you go a day or a week without doing it?
 - 3. Do I have an uneasy conscience about it? (Romans 14:23)
 - 4. Could it cause another Christian to stumble? (Romans 14:15)
- III. An Unmatched Showdown (1:15-21)
- a. God’s protection.
 - i. Favor
 - 1. He was extended favor & partiality by the official that was to watch over him and his group.
 - 2. God put it in the man's heart to be kind to Daniel. God always takes up the defense of one who stands uncompromisingly for his truth. Sometimes people will say, "Aren't you worried when you take a strong stand on something?" "No I'm worried when I don't." "Aren't you worried when you speak boldly on something?" "No I'm worried when I don't." "Aren't you afraid what people might think?" "Not at all, what I am afraid of is what God might think."
 - b. God’s blessings.
 - i. Physically
 - 1. They were stronger than the rest
 - 2. They were mentally sound & advanced.
 - ii. Spiritually
 - 1. They gained confidence in God.

2. They gained a deeper desire to stand for God.
- c. The King's approval
- i. The Bible says that the King communed with them and found none like these 4 young men.
 - ii. In all matters of wisdom and instruction, he found them 10 times better than all the rest.
 - iii. Daniel rose to a high office there in the palace and became highly trusted of the King. Why? Because of his intellect, no b/c of his character.
 1. Proverbs 16:7 – “When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”
 2. Personality can open doors, but only character can keep them open.
- Elmer G. Letterman